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The situation in the Middle East

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Fifty-seventh year

Letter dated 31 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I should like to alert you to the fact that the letter dated 17 January 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations (A/56/778-S/2002/79) conveys many misconceptions and tries to invoke international law in order to provide cover for the continuing Israeli intrusions on Lebanese sovereignty in the air, on land and at sea that are in flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and of the Blue Line established by the United Nations.

It is disturbing that the Israeli violations and incursions have begun to escalate. There have been more than 3,000 since June 2000, and in December alone there were more than 75. The sound barrier has repeatedly been broken in provocative overflights by Israeli warplanes in which some dozens of aircraft often take part in a single operation. This alarms the civilian population, especially blameless children at school, and causes serious damage to property.

These Israeli incursions and violations are a source of tension in the region. They are unjustified provocations, as was stated in your most recent report to the Security Council. With them, Israel is seeking to undermine the stability that prevails in Lebanon's various regions. They occur in the context of the serial violence that it wrongfully commits on a daily basis in the occupied Palestinian territories while seeking to ignore the agreements signed and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

It is useful to recall that full withdrawal from Lebanon would require withdrawal from Lebanon's airspace and territorial waters as well as from the remaining occupied Lebanese territory. It would also require the provision of all maps of minefields and records of their location, a halt to outrages against civilians and the release of detainees being held without trial.

The resolutions of the Security Council and the principles of international law make it incumbent on Israel to halt its incursions, violations and infringements rather than to use these resolutions and principles to obscure the facts and incite the international community against Lebanon in the name of combating terrorism.

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Lebanon has condemned all forms of terrorism, and its laws and statutes impose the severest of penalties on perpetrators of terrorist acts. There is, however, a dividing line between legitimate resistance to occupation and terrorism. Resistance to occupation is self-defence and territorial defence, and it is a right that is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in numerous resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly.

It would be better for Israel to desist from its oppression and arrogance and to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the principles of international law instead of continuing to occupy the territory of others and to violate their rights in open defiance of international humanitarian law.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 42, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sélim **Tadmoury**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative